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By Edward Neilan

**Those talk shows
sheer brutality!**

Vitaly Yurchenko, the spy who came in from Fredericksburg, decided to go back to the Soviet Union rather than face a year of appearances on American television talk shows, according to sources.

This was the real brutality and human rights violation which Mr. Yurchenko felt he faced due to the notoriety of being a top defector.

In fact, according to sources in Coventry, the development near Fredericksburg where Mr. Yurchenko spent his last sleepless night in Central Intelligence Agency "captivity," the sticking point on the lucrative contract offered him by the CIA was that he did not want to face the torture of appearing on the Merv Griffin Show. Additionally, he did not choose to put up with the loss of sleep implied in being on "Late Night with David Letterman."

A theory being investigated by the Free Lance Star, Fredericksburg's leading newspaper, is that Mr. Yurchenko's return was a joint plot of the Spotsylvania, Caroline and Stafford counties' chambers of commerce to attract more tourists to those economically depressed provinces south of Metropolitan Washington.

Police already are reporting an increase in traffic — including motorized gawkers — seeking to determine which of the large homes along Highway 17 was the CIA "safe house" in which Mr. Yurchenko was living.

Yet another theory making the rounds of food and drink establishments in Dumfries, a small town which Mr. Yurchenko had to pass through on his way back to "freedom" at the Soviet Embassy, is that the main dereliction of duty on the part of his CIA handlers was in not lining up a girlfriend for Vitaly quickly enough.

Other sources insist that although he had been given considerable freedom to roam, Mr. Yurchenko did not find the ambience of Fredericksburg's singles bars to his liking. Also he was fed up with eating cheeseburgers and longed for a bowl of hot borsch, which he knew the Soviet Embassy would provide.

There seems to be no truth to the rumor that Mr. Yurchenko, in the very depths of depression near the end of his ordeal, had placed a phone call to "The Equalizer."

This column's leading consultant on Soviet defectors, Russian-born comedian Yakov Smirnoff, believes Mr. Yurchenko faces a grim future if and when he returns to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Smirnoff, 32, who sometimes appears at the Comedy Cafe on K Street here, said the prodigal spy might even be sent to Siberia. "At least they have solar heating in Siberia — no roofs," Mr. Smirnoff said.

The worst thing that could happen is for Mr. Yurchenko to be mentioned in Moscow's thick Sunday newspapers. The reason Sunday's papers are so thick, says Mr. Smirnoff, is because "that's the day they run next week's obituaries."

Television coverage of Mr. Yurchenko's case is bound to be limited in Moscow, said Mr. Smirnoff. "Channel One there is propaganda. Channel Two has a KGB man telling you to turn back to Channel One."

Mr. Smirnoff does not mean to denigrate or ridicule the Soviet society which Mr. Yurchenko first said he defected from and now wants to return to. The comedian merely wants to demonstrate differences between cultures.

"Concepts are different over there," Mr. Smirnoff said. "My favorite concept here that they don't have in the Soviet Union is the concept of the warning shot. The only warning shots there are when the person next to you gets hit."

Edward Neilan is foreign editor of The Times.